

Pearl Lam Galleries

Hong Kong Pedder Building

CHUN KWANG YOUNG

Exhibition Dates 15 September–26 October, 2017 Monday–Saturday, 10am–7pm
Venue Pearl Lam Galleries, 6/F, Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Hong Kong

Hong Kong—Pearl Lam Galleries is delighted to present a solo exhibition by internationally renowned Korean artist Chun Kwang Young (b. 1944), covering works created from the mid-1970s to the mid-2000s, as well as some exciting new pieces. This important retrospective exhibition investigates the evolution of the artist's oeuvre—from his all-over abstract paintings of the 1970s and 1980s to the pivotal early works of the 1990s, which are at the root of Chun's celebrated long-running *Aggregation* series, featuring his distinctive use of triangular, string-tied parcels of mulberry paper from old Korean books.

Chun was drawn to Abstract Expressionism when he first moved to the United States. Painting was for him a way to express his experiences freely and a tool to explore the gaps between the ideal and reality. However, Chun soon realized that in order to progress as an artist, he had to move beyond an established artistic canon and methodology. During his long stays in the United States, Chun experienced loneliness and nostalgia, which became the impetus for developing his art. His paintings from the mid-1970s and the late 1980s, which depict a transparent field of colour in an all-over composition, bear influences from Abstract Expressionism. Painted on the surface without primer, his works were made from a direct engagement with light and colour while respecting the limitation of the medium. His interest in colour and light and how they affect our association of an art object continues to be reflected in his later works.

Since 1994, Chun has shifted his focus to his *Aggregation* series. It was this pivotal change, where he abandoned the traditional brush and canvas to work with traditional Korean mulberry paper in an innovative way, that has established his artistic career. Inspired by childhood memories of clusters of medicine packages, wrapped in mulberry paper and hung from the ceiling at the clinic, the artist began using this material in his works, deeply imbuing them with distinct sensibilities. His well-known sculptural *Aggregations* feature hand-cut triangles of polystyrene, individually wrapped in delicate mulberry paper pages torn from old books, which are arranged on canvases to form strikingly textured low-relief wall works in a style that is in close dialogue with the practice of assemblage. With a trompe l'oeil quality, Chun's works create the illusion of depth and coalescence and, ultimately, represent the harmony and conflict in the unity of many.

Chun states, "The triangular pieces wrapped in mulberry paper are basic units of information: the basic cells of a life that only exists in art, as well as in individual social events or historical facts. By attaching these pieces one by one to a two-dimensional surface, I wanted to express how basic units of information can both create harmony and conflict. This became an important milestone in my long artistic journey to express the troubles of a modern man who is driven to a devastated life by materialism, endless competition, conflict, and destruction."

Protruding from the flat plane, the clustered triangles exude an organic, chaotic energy, defying any suggestion of a pattern or method to the perceived madness. Korean mulberry paper, which is at the centre of Chun's artistic practice, deeply imbues his works with distinctly Korean connotations and sensibilities by lending its potency for metaphorical associations. Although long prized as a medium for writing and drawing, it was also central to Korean daily life. Delicately translucent, yet strong and durable, mulberry paper was used for a variety of purposes in Korean households. From covering doors, windows, and walls to carpeting floors and packing dried goods, mulberry paper proved to be a

versatile material—a worthy symbol of Korean national pride. The paper is also evocative of herbal medicine bundles that were prominent in Korean traditional medicine prior to the advent of modern medicine in the years following the Korean War. Medicinal herbs were hung from the ceiling in clusters, wrapped in mulberry paper inscribed with invocations for good health.

Titling the works with the prefix *Aggregation* is a self-reflexive acknowledgement of their nature as large-scale compositions assembled together from several distinct parts. Like an archaeologist of knowledge, the act of collecting disparate units of information to form a coherent whole can be read as a reconciliation of moral conflicts deliberately formulated to mimic a meditative consciousness as embodied by each individual piece that is dyed, wrapped, and arranged in its own place.

About Chun Kwang Young

Seoul-based artist Chun Kwang Young (b. 1944, Hongcheon County, Korea) received his BFA from Hongik University in Korea and MFA from the Philadelphia College of Art, USA.

Chun's works have been exhibited extensively around the world; most recently, he held a solo exhibition at the Boghossian Foundation in Brussels, Belgium this year. Group exhibitions include *Paper in Profile: Mixografia and Taller de Gráfica Mexicana* (2016), Mixografia, Athens, Greece; the Venice Biennale (2015), Palazzo Grimani Art Museum, Venice, Italy; *Odd Volumes: Book Art from the Allan Chasanoff Collection* (2014), Yale University Art Gallery, Connecticut, USA; Holland Paper Biennial (2006), CODA Museum, Apeldoorn, the Netherlands; Yokohama Contemporary Artists Exhibition (1986), The Museum of Yokohama, Yokohama, Japan; and The Shin Sang Group Show (1966–67), National Museum of Modern Art, Seoul, Korea.

Chun Kwang Young's works have been acquired by and are included in esteemed public collections such as the Rockefeller Foundation in New York, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Woodrow Wilson International Center in Washington D.C., the United Nations headquarters in New York, the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Seoul, the Philadelphia Society Building, Seoul Museum of Art, the National Gallery of Australia at Canberra, Museum Kunstwerk in Germany, and the Busan Art Museum, among others. Named the Artist of the Year by the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Gwacheon (Seoul), in 2001, Chun has also received many other accolades, including the Presidential Prize in the 41st Korean Culture and Art Prize by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in Korea in 2009.

About Pearl Lam Galleries

Founded by Pearl Lam, Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia's contemporary art scene. With over 20 years of experience exhibiting Asian and Western art and design, it is one of the leading and most established contemporary art galleries to be launched out of China.

Playing a vital role in stimulating international dialogue on Chinese and Asian contemporary art, the Galleries is dedicated to championing artists who re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice from the region. The Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore collaborate with renowned curators, each presenting distinct programming from major solo exhibitions, special projects and installations to conceptually rigorous group shows. Based on the philosophy of Chinese Literati where art forms have no hierarchy, Pearl Lam Galleries is dedicated to breaking down boundaries between different disciplines, with a unique gallery model committed to encouraging cross-cultural exchange.

The four branches of Pearl Lam Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore represent an increasingly influential roster of contemporary artists. Chinese artists Zhu Jinshi and Su Xiaobai, who synthesize Chinese sensibilities with an international visual language, are presented internationally with work now included in major private and public collections worldwide. The Galleries has also introduced leading international artists, such as Jenny Holzer, Leonardo Drew, Carlos Rolón/Dzine and Yinka Shonibare MBE, to markets in the region, providing opportunities for new audiences in Asia to encounter their work. Pearl Lam Galleries encourages international artists to create new work which engages specifically with the region, collaborating to produce thought-provoking, culturally relevant work.

Press Enquiries

Winky Cheung / Pearl Lam Galleries

winky@pearllamgalleries.com / +852 2522 1428